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Notes on Leon Sigal, Fighting to a Finish: The Politics of War Termination in the United States and Japan, 1945 (Cornell, Ithaca, 1948)

GA said recently to me that the USG didn't need to fear modifying UCS to allow retention of the Emperor, but Sigal certainly cites evidence to the contrary.

See MacLeish and Acheson to Grew, morning of May 28, 1945 (112) and Elmer Davis (115).

--How did Grew know (correctly) on May 28 (discussion with Truman) that "The greatest obstacle to unconditional surrender by the Japanese is their belief that this would entail the destruction or permanent removal of the Emperor and the institution of the Throne. If some indication can now be given the Japanese that they themselves, when once thoroughly defeated and rendered important to wage war in the future, will be permitted to determine their own future political structure, they will be afforded a method of saving face without which surrender will be highly unlikely." 113

(I.e., this assurance was a necessary condition for surrender, or "UCS". Correct.)

--In support of DE thesis that it seemed desirable for domestic political reasons to accompany this clarification of US war aims--which would look to the public like an undesirable concession--with a tough, brutal bombing:

"He evoked the firebombing of Tokyo two days earlier [in which the Palace grounds had been inadvertently hit, to the consternation of the Imperial aides]... "Issuing the statement in the immediate aftermath of the Tokyo raid might also reduce the political fallout at home."

Thus, it wasn't necessary to wait for the atomic bomb (which Grew didn't know about); the same effect could have been achieved by pairing the declaration with the Tokyo bombing. (But then, we wouldn't have gotten to drop the Bomb. (Or invade; how unhappy, after all, was Marshall and the Army that they didn't get to invade after all? This seems rarely addressed, despite comments earlier by the Navy and others on the Army's lust to invade, and Sigal's emphasis on the steps taken by Marshall and Stimson to get presidential approval for the planning of the invasion of Kyushu, including pressing for Soviet entry).

"Stimson says he had another reason for delay" [in issuing the declaration, offering to keep the Emperor, beyond Memorial Day (May 31?)] "It was an awkward meeting, because there were people present", Grew among them, that kept him from discussing "the real feature which would govern the situation, namely S-1." (diary, May

29)

"Conciliatory gestures to Japan, if needed, might prove more acceptable both in Tokyo and in Washington against a backdrop of threats of atomic bombing." 115
(italics added)

This, in its reference to Washington, is my thesis. (How closely is it based on the Grew memcon; or is it speculation by Sigal?) Note also the distinction between the threat and the execution of atomic bombing; or did Stimson think an actual demonstration on a city was needed, to make further threats credible and effective? I think not, since he proposed later to issue this warning at Potsdam. Thus, Stimson (or is it just Sigal?) contradicts Bernstein's assertion that Stimson always believed that the combination of the assurance and actual atomic bombing would be necessary.

Sigal says "Marshall remained convinced that, with or without the atomic bomb, the army would have to invade Japan in order to compel unconditional surrender at the earliest possible date." 111 But there are two ambiguities here: a) What is meant by "invasion of Japan": Kyushu, or Honshu too? (Almost surely, the former). b) What is meant by unconditional surrender? Did it mean, with a public assurance to the Emperor, or without any assurance? Marshall was willing to make such an assurance (114), at least when it could be combined with a threat of the Bomb at Potsdam; this seems to imply that he was willing to see the war ended without invasion, unless he simply supported issuing the assurance without any expectation that it would lead to surrender (if so, why bother, given the domestic flak?)

If that is so, Marshall's and Stimson's efforts to get Presidential approval for the planning of the Kyushu invasion might have been simply that, effort to make sure that the planning and preparation could go ahead, in case it were needed. Why might it be needed? In case the assurance to the Emperor were not given, for domestic reasons? (Could that really be accepted as reason for paying the costs of invasion? Of Kyushu, perhaps. But would that have been enough to get UCS, without assurance to the Emperor? Did Marshall believe that? Could you sacrifice 46,000 men (or 1/5 of 250,000 casualties; or, 100,000) in order to hang the Emperor (compare Panama invasion!) to satisfy public opinion, when you believed that the public was wrong, and that the Emperor was not only not guilty but should be preserved to serve American interests?!)

Likewise, if Stimson really believed that a combination of the offer and the threat of the Bomb might be enough, and should be issued, then he was not determined to see the Bomb used (and perhaps put less weight than Byrnes or Truman, if they did, on domestic opposition to the offer).

--However, evidence supporting BB's assertion about Stimson: Diary June 19, after meeting with Committee of Three, the day after June 18 meeting with JCS: "My only fixed date is the chance chance warning, which must be given before an actual landing of the ground forces on Japan, and fortunately the plans provide for enough time to bring in the sanctions to our warning in the shape of heavy ordinary bombing and an attack of S-1." 122.

[This is slightly ambiguous. It is consistent with a warning of the bomb, which might be effective, but which could be followed by an actual attack. Or it might mean that he intended the warning to accompany the attack, i.e., to follow it slightly (as actually happened, in terms of the assurance. If the latter, he could not have meant an explicit assurance to be issued at Potsdam: but he did argue for this, did he not? If the former, and the warning were issued at Potsdam, then the warning might have led to surrender even without an attack.

Stimson's memo to the President of July 2: the proclamation "would have to be revamped to conform to the efficacy of such a weapon if the warning were to be delivered, as would almost certainly be the case, if in conjunction with its use."

Again, this does appear to assume that an actual attack would be necessary (as Bernstein says). But it might also mean that the threat would be issued first, say at Potsdam, with readiness to carry it out if necessary.

--With Stimson regarding S-1 as dominating the issue of when to issue terms of surrender, as of May 29 in discussion with Grew: didn't this constitute a "need to know" for Grew?! Why would he have been kept in the dark (as Acting Secretary; while his boss, Stettinius, did know!--then in San Francisco for the UN Conference!

--On same day as memorial Day message (May 31?), Hopkins sent back a cable from Moscow saying that "the Soviet Army will be properly deployed on the Manchuria positions by August 8th" (i.e., three months to the day after VE Day? Ad the day they did come in; however, on July 17, Stalin promised Truman they would enter by (on?) August 15; they apparently speeded this up after Hiroshima.)

--117 HST's willingness to see the question of the offer to the Emperor (He "liked the idea") put on the agenda of the Potsdam meeting, seems to indicate that (like Stimson?) he was prepared to see the war ended without use of the Bomb, except as a threat!

His mind might have been changed by Byrnes (who seems to have been critical in removing this item from the agenda at Potsdam, or at persuading Truman to do this). But this could have involved either one (or both) of two different appeals: a) the domestic reaction to the offer (as Hull argued; GA argues against the force

of this, but there seems a good deal of evidence that it was taken seriously within the USG, even by Grew, who favored the offer); b) the demonstration to the Russians, for effect on European negotiations; or c) the justification of the project (is there any direct evidence that this was taken seriously above the level of Groves? To be sure, both Truman and Byrnes had earlier been concerned with the question of justification).

[Did Truman and Byrnes hope that Bomb would avert need altogether to give the Japanese any assurance on the Emperor? I.e., hope that the Japanese would simply accept UCS after Bomb, with no mention of the Emperor? (They came close to this, since US reply to their initiative made no explicit promise). After all, they were intending to keep the Emperor, But there did seem to be concern about domestic opposition to that, or to any announcement of it. (In the end, how much comment or opposition was there?)